

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

- Armenia should accede to the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC) as a matter of priority.
- Despite not yet being a State Party to the APMBC, Armenia has obligations under international human rights law to clear anti-personnel mines in areas under its jurisdiction or control as soon as possible.
- Armenia should clarify the extent of remaining mine contamination, including in military restricted zones.
- Armenia should mobilise the necessary resources to finish mine clearance and set a deadline for the completion of operations.

UNDERSTANDING OF AP MINE CONTAMINATION

At the end of 2019, Armenia had more than 5.69km² of confirmed mined area and a further 3.8km² of suspected mined area, as set out in Table 1.¹ The mined areas contained anti-personnel mines, anti-vehicle mines, or a combination of both, as well as unexploded ordnance (UXO).² Of 94 confirmed hazardous areas (CHAs), 55 contain anti-personnel mines, totalling just under 2.9km². Three of the six suspected hazardous areas (SHAs), totalling just over 0.1km², may also be contaminated by anti-personnel mines.³ Territory occupied by Armenia during the conflict with Azerbaijan is believed to be significantly contaminated by mines and explosive remnants of war (ERW), including unexploded submunitions.⁴ However, the precise extent of contamination in those districts is unknown.

Table 1: Mined area (at end 2019)⁵

Type of contamination	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)
AP mines	41	2,176,085	3	105,500
AV mines	39	2,791,608	3	3,728,442
AP and AV mines	11	706,046	0	0
AP mines and UXO	2	12,769	0	0
AP and AV mines and UXO	1	4,842	0	0
Totals	94	5,691,350	6	3,833,942

AP = Anti-personnel AV = Anti-vehicle

Four of Armenia's eleven provinces still contain mined areas. Three are contaminated with both anti-personnel and anti-vehicle mines, while the fourth – Vayots Dzor – is contaminated solely with anti-vehicle mines, as set out in Table 2.⁶ The difference in the total estimate for mine contamination between the end of 2018 and end of 2019 cannot be explained or reconciled by the total area released during the intervening 12 months.

Table 2: Mined area by province (at end 2019)⁷

Province	Type of contamination	CHAs	Area (m ²)	SHAs	Area (m ²)
Gegharkunik	AP mines	3	584,022	2	105,123
	AV mines	5	2,428,128	3	3,728,442
Syunik	AP mines	32	1,424,512	1	377
	AV mines	21	280,425	0	0
	AP and AV mines	8	676,617	0	0
	AP mines and UXO	2	12,769	0	0
	AP and AV mines and UXO	1	4,842	0	0
Tavush	AP mines	6	167,551	0	0
	AV mines	10	15,603	0	0
	AP and AV mines	3	29,429	0	0
Vayots Dzor	AV mines	3	67,452	0	0
Totals		94	5,691,350	6	3,833,942

A Landmine Impact Survey (LIS) was conducted in Armenia in 2005, followed by partial survey of 17 sites by The HALO Trust in 2012, and then again, in 2012–13, by the Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD). FSD found 17 SHAs estimated to cover 26km² and 114 CHAs that covered 21km² in four districts bordering Azerbaijan. Thirteen of these areas, totalling 1.8km², contained only UXO and not mines.⁸ In 2019, the Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE) conducted non-technical survey in Syunik province but military-restricted zones continued to be off limits for survey and clearance.⁹

Mine and ERW contamination in Armenia is primarily the consequence of armed conflict with Azerbaijan in 1988–94, in which both sides used mines. The heaviest contamination is along the borders and confrontation lines with Azerbaijan, including the area in and around Nagorno-Karabakh and other territories controlled by the Nagorno-Karabakh Defence Forces. Armenia's border with Georgia has been cleared of mines, whereas the border with Turkey, also mined during the Soviet era, is still contaminated.¹⁰ While non-technical survey in 2012–13 by the FSD did not find evidence of mines outside the buffer zones in Ararat province, which borders Turkey, certain areas on that border remain unsurveyed because they are controlled by Russian border troops.¹¹

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The CHDE was established by the Armenian government in 2011 as a civilian, non-commercial state body responsible for conducting survey and clearance and identifying contaminated areas. In 2014, the CHDE was made Armenia's national mine action authority.¹² The CHDE can negotiate with international demining organisations, accept international funding, sign contracts, and receive international assistance.¹³ The CHDE has an advisory board, composed of representatives from the Ministries of Defence, Emergency Situations, Territorial Administration, Education, and Justice.¹⁴

In 2013, in conformity with a government decree, the CHDE began developing national mine action legislation. The CHDE began drafting the law in 2015¹⁵ with the support of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) office in Yerevan.¹⁶ In 2019, the CHDE expected to submit the draft mine action law to the new Parliament of Armenia for discussion before the end of the year following which it will need to receive government approval and be adopted by parliament.¹⁷ As at June 2020, there has not been any further progress in the adoption of the mine action law.¹⁸

In 2019, the government allocated AMD229 million (approx. \$475,000) to cover the costs of the CHDE and AMD110 million (approx. \$228,000) for survey and clearance operations. Armenia does not receive any donor funding for mine action.¹⁹

The CHDE receives capacity development support from the Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining (GICHD). CHDE staff have been trained in land release and information management.²⁰

GENDER AND DIVERSITY

The CHDE does not have a gender policy and implementation plan but has reported that gender has been mainstreamed in Armenia's draft national mine action strategy. During community liaison activities, all groups affected by mine contamination are consulted, including women and children. The CHDE is said to offer equal employment opportunities for both men and women. Two of the department heads within the CHDE are female and out of a total of 47 employees, 16 are women (34%), most of whom occupy senior or specialist roles. In addition, two women work in the non-technical survey teams, but there are no women deminers.²¹

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT AND REPORTING

With FSD's support, the CHDE set up and manages the national Information Management System for Mine Action (IMSMA) database.²² The CHDE had been planning to install IMSMA Core in 2019 but as at June 2020, this had been delayed for an unspecified amount of time due to the outbreak of COVID-19. In 2019, the CHDE elaborated forms using KoboCollect Software to improve data collection in the field. Once IMSMA Core is installed, it will be possible to import the data into the database using KoboCollect forms.²³

PLANNING AND TASKING

The draft National Strategic Plan on Mine Action was presented for the approval to the Armenian Government in 2018, however, as at August 2020, it had still to be approved and adopted.²⁴ The main objectives of the draft Plan are to address, as a priority, anti-personnel mines in CHAs that have a humanitarian impact, increasing community safety in support of the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.²⁵

Priority for clearance is based on CHDE criteria. Priority is given first to contaminated areas that are up to 1km away from a population centre, then to those near agricultural land, and finally to contaminated areas that negatively affect the environment. These are mostly located in the mountains. To optimise efficient deployment of resources, clearance plans are typically drawn up on a community-by-community basis.²⁶

LAND RELEASE SYSTEM

STANDARDS AND LAND RELEASE EFFICIENCY

In 2013, with the assistance of FSD, the CHDE developed the Armenian National Mine Action Standards (NMAS) and submitted them for government approval. The NMAS were approved by the government in April 2014.²⁷ In 2018, amendments were made to the NMAS for mine risk education, accreditation of demining organisations, and mine detection dogs (MDDs). No amendments were made to the NMAS in 2019. According to CHDE, reviews of the NMAS are conducted following the International Mine Action Standards (IMAS) and international best practice.²⁸

The CHDE is currently developing its standard operating procedures (SOPs).²⁹ SOPs on manual mine clearance and battle area clearance (BAC) have already been elaborated.³⁰ In 2019, the CHDE elaborated SOPs on BAC, the marking of hazardous areas, and medical support.³¹

OPERATORS AND OPERATIONAL TOOLS

In 2019 demining in Armenia was conducted by two operators, the Foundation for Demining and Demolition and the HALO Trust. The CHDE deployed one non-technical survey team of three personnel while in 2018 they deployed one technical survey team. The Foundation for Demining and Demolition deployed two clearance teams totalling six deminers for mine clearance operations and The HALO Trust deployed one team of seven deminers for BAC operations. In 2020, there was a planned increase in capacity of one manual clearance team, one mechanical demining team, and one non-technical survey team. Currently all clearance is conducted manually following the failure of six MDDs to obtain accreditation in 2017 following which they were "demobilised".³²

Quality management is conducted in accordance with IMAS and the NMAS. Quality assurance (QA) is conducted by dedicated officers who make regular field visits to inspect cleared land.³³ Quality control (QC) is conducted once clearance of the land has been completed, but prior to handover.³⁴ In 2019, the CHDE conducted QA/QC of demining activities and handed over the released land to the community. QA is conducted by CHDE QA officers through regular field visits who ensure that demining operations are conducted in accordance with SOPs and the Task Order.³⁵

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS AND PROGRESS TOWARDS COMPLETION

LAND RELEASE OUTPUTS IN 2019

No anti-personnel mined area was cancelled or reduced through survey in 2019 as in the previous year. A total of 16,271m² of anti-vehicle mine contaminated area was cancelled in Syunik province through non-technical survey in 2019; no technical survey was conducted.³⁶

A total of 16,180m² of anti-personnel mined area was cleared in 2019, with two anti-personnel mines found and destroyed. The clearance was conducted by the Foundation for Demining and Demolition from the Davit Bek CHA in Syunik province.³⁷ This was the remainder of the Davit Bek CHA where clearance began in 2018 (9,237m² of anti-personnel mined area had been cleared by the end of that year). Clearance of the Davit Bek CHA has now been completed and the land has been handed over to the community. In addition, The HALO Trust conducted BAC operations in Syunik province, clearing 40,400m².³⁸

No target date has been set for the completion of mine clearance in Armenia, due to the uncertainty over future capacity and funding.³⁹ Moreover, over the past five years, demining in Armenia has been slow and productivity rates paltry, as Table 3 illustrates. In 2019, very little demining took place. Armenia claims that challenges in its mine and

ERW clearance include the low level of contamination and the random distribution of mines, which creates obstacles for the effective and efficient implementation of technical survey and clearance activities, and the absence of donor funding.⁴⁰ Operational capacity was expected to increase in 2020, with mechanical capacity being introduced for the first time, which hopefully will increase clearance output.⁴¹ Going forward, Armenia will not complete clearance without a significant increase in funding and capacity.

Table 3: Mine clearance in 2015-19

Year	Area cleared (km ²)
2019	*0.02
2018	*0.01
2017	0
2016	0.02
2015	0.07
Total	*0.12

* Area rounded up

PLANNING FOR RESIDUAL RISK AFTER COMPLETION

According to the CHDE, Armenia has included provisions for addressing previously unknown mined areas following completion in national strategies. Currently the only national survey and clearance capacity in place to address previously unknown mined areas discovered following completion is the team at the CHDE.⁴²

- 1 Email from Margaret Lazyan, Head of Mine Risk Education and Victim Assistance, Center for Humanitarian Demining and Expertise (CHDE), 25 June 2020.
- 2 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Azerbaijan National Agency for Mine Action (ANAMA), "ANAMA 2017"; and Council of Foreign Relations, "Nagorno-Karabakh conflict", at: <https://on.cfr.org/3brZF3k>.
- 5 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 25 June 2020.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 CHDE, "FSD non-technical mine action survey", Yerevan, 2013, p. 12.
- 9 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019 and 25 June 2020.
- 10 Emails from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 19 March 2014 and 28 April 2017, and interview in Geneva, 1 April 2014.
- 11 CHDE, "FSD non-technical mine action survey", CHDE, Yerevan, 2013, p. 9; and emails from Varsine Miskaryan, CHDE, 8 August 2016; and Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.
- 12 Emails from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 8 June 2015; and Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 10 August 2020.
- 13 Armenian Ministry of Defence, "The New Legal Status of the Humanitarian De-Mining Center", 13 February 2014; and email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 26 September 2018.
- 14 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 27 September 2018.
- 15 Email from Varsine Miskaryan, CHDE, 8 August 2016.
- 16 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.
- 17 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019.
- 18 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 25 June 2020.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 19 March 2014.
- 23 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 25 June 2020.
- 24 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 10 August 2020.
- 25 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019.
- 26 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.
- 27 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 Email from Varsine Miskaryan, CHDE, 8 August 2016.
- 30 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018.
- 31 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 25 June 2020.
- 32 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019 and 25 June 2020.
- 33 Email from Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 8 June 2015.
- 34 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 8 August 2018.
- 35 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 10 August 2020.
- 36 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 25 June 2020.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Ibid.
- 39 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 19 April 2019.
- 40 Emails from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 10 August 2020; and Ruben Arakelyan, CHDE, 28 April 2017.
- 41 Email from Margaret Lazyan, CHDE, 25 June 2020.
- 42 Ibid.